

Untouchables or The Children of India's Ghetto

Contents

PART III - Roots of the Problem

[Chapter 8 : Parallel cases](#)

[Chapter 9 : Hindus and want of public conscience](#)

[Chapter 10 : Hindus and their want of social conscience](#)

[Chapter 11 : The hindu and his belief in caste](#)

PART III

Roots of the Problem

CHAPTER 8

PARALLEL CASES

1. Slavery in Rome. II. Villeinage in England. III. Jews and Servility. IV. Negroes and slavery.

Social inequality is not confined to Hindus only. It prevailed in other countries also and was responsible for dividing society into higher and lower, free and un-free, respectable and despised. It would be interesting to compare the condition and status of the untouchables in India with the condition and status of the un-free and the despised classes in other countries ancient and modern. For an intelligent understanding of the differences and similarities it is essential to have some idea of the history of such parallel cases before any comparison can be instituted. It is not possible to give a survey of all such classes in all parts of the world. Nor is it necessary. A few typical cases can only be taken as illustrations.

In studying the relationship between the Hindus and the Untouchables three questions at once come to one's mind. Why has untouchability not vanished? Why does the Hindu regard lawlessness against the Untouchables as legitimate and lawful? Why does the Hindu feel no qualms of conscience in his dealings with the Untouchables?

I

Classes, which like the Untouchables were lowly and despised have at one time existed in other societies also. For instance, they existed in once ancient Rome. The population of ancient Rome fell into five classes: (1) Patricians, (2) Plebians, (3) Clients, (4) Slaves and (5) Freemen.

The Patricians were the ruling class. They were the civics in every sense. The rest were all servile in status. The Plebs and the Clients were destroyed by war. Those of the new comers who invoked the protection of the heads of Patrician

families of repute and were ready to become their vassals were known as clients. Those who were too independent to brook submission to a private patron put themselves under the direct protection of the sovereign and became royal tenants and were known as Plebians. The Plebians had the right to hold property both movable and immovable to transfer it by quiritian modes of conveyance, and to have the protection for it of the tribunals. But the Plebian had no share in the Government of the City. He was a half-fledged citizen— *civies sine suffragio*. The Plebs were denied any participation in the religion of the city and as men to whom the suspicion were incompetent, any intermarriage between the Patrician and the Plebian was out of question. The client had to look to his Patrician patron for support and maintenance. The Patrician patron had to provide all that was necessary for his sustenance and that of his wife and children. This relation was a hereditary one, a client passed on from father to son. The client had not only to depend upon his Patrician patron for his maintenance but he had also to depend upon him for his legal protection. Not being a civic, a client had no right of suit and his Patrician patron had to assist his client in his redress for him for his injuries and represent him before the tribunals when he became involved in litigation.

As to the slaves there were millions of them. A single rich landholder might own hundreds and even thousands, and it was a poor man that did not have several at least. They were just things to be owned. They were not persons in the eye of the law and had therefore no rights. They received kind treatment from a few humane masters. But generally they were treated with the greatest cruelty. " If a slave coughs or sneezes during a meal, if he lets a key fall noisy to the floor, we fall into a great rage Often we strike too hard and shatter a limb or break a tooth," said Seneca. One rich Roman used to punish his slaves for carelessness by casting them into a fishpond as food for lampreys. The slaves who displeased their masters were ordinarily sent to an underground prison. During the day, they had to work loaded with heavy iron chains. Many were branded with red-hot iron. The mill where the slaves had to work is thus described by a Roman author; 'Gods! What poor shrunken up men? With white skins striped with blows of the whip..... They were only the shreds of tunis; bent forward, head shaved, the feet held in a chain, the body deformed by the heat of the fire, the eyelids eaten away by the fumes, everything covered with grain dust'.¹

English society also had at one time its servile classes. One has only to turn to the Domesday Book to see what the state of English Society was at the time of the Norman conquest.

The Domesday Book which is a social survey of the land in England and its various kinds of tenants made by William the Conqueror immediately after his

conquest in 1086 shows the following classes in which the population was divided:

1. Gentry & Clergy	Made up of	Tenants in Chief Under tenants	1,400 7,900	9,300
2. Freeholders Yeomen	made up of	Freemen Socmen	12,000 32,000	44,000
3. Half-free or Unfree	made up of	Villeins Cottars and Borders	169,000 90,000	259,000
4. Slaves				25,000

Out of a total of 3,37,000 souls as many as 2,84,000 were either unfree or slaves.

These are examples of servility in which race or religion played no part. But examples of servility by reason of race or religion are not wanting in history. The principal one is that of the Jews. On account of the belief that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ, the Jews have been subjected to persecution. During the Middle ages in almost all the European towns, the Jews were compelled to reside within a restricted quarter in a separate part of the town, and this Jewish quarter came to be known as the ' Ghetto '. A Council held in Coyanza in Australia in 1050 enacted 'that no Christian shall reside in the same house with Jews, nor partake of the food; whoever transgresses this decree shall perform penances for seven days, or, refusing to do it, if a person of rank, he shall be excommunicated for a year; if of an inferior degree, he shall receive 100 lashes.' The Council of Falencia in 1388 enacted that "Christians must not dwell within the quarters assigned to the Jews and Moors, and those that resided within them were to remove therefrom within two months after the publication of this decree in the Cathedral and if they did not, were to be compelled by Ecclesiastical censure." In the Middle ages the Jews were obliged to have communal baths. No Jewish community could be destitute of such baths because the State often forbade the Jews to bathe in the rivers which the Christians used. In the fourteenth Century the Jews of Augers were readmitted to the town on several onerous conditions, one being that they would not bathe in the river Maine. The State also levied certain taxes upon the Jews. They were of three kinds—poll taxes, and particular fines and dues for individual transactions and privileges. The age at which Jews or Jewesses became liable to the poll tax varied considerably but the age was very young, and in Spain, as in England in 1273, every Jew above the age of ten was rateable. The billeting of soldiers on Jews in times of peace was a frequent species of exaction. So many were the vexatious dues exacted from the Jews everywhere throughout the Middle ages that it would be impossible to enumerate them all. To crown all this Pope

Innocent III decided in 1215 that thenceforward the Jews must be marked off from the Christians by a badge prominently fastened to their outermost garment. Clear and emphatic in its demand that the Jews must wear badges, the Lateran council nevertheless avoided details. It left the definition of the size, colour, and character of the degrading mark to the taste of local Governors and States. Each Governor and State devised a badge of its own pattern. On account of the extraordinary number of modification, size and shape the badge sometimes became obsolete and the Jews managed to evade it. As the badge was often hidden, in 1525 Pope Clement VII changed it for a yellow hat or bonnet.

A consideration of the position of the Untouchables reminds one of the positions of the Catholics in England. The Catholics were subjected to many disabilities. The catalogue of their disabilities is given below:

"1. That of Catholic marriages or of marriages Catholics celebrated by Catholic priests being deemed invalid by the existing laws, so that if one of the parties quit the other *quicumque de causa* (from any reason whatsoever), the deserted party receives no relief from the parish, nor redress from the law of his or her country. The priest, also it is said, may be transported, or put in prison and condemned to transportation for having married the parties.

2. That of foundations or of moneys appropriated for the maintenance of priests, or to support the Catholic worship, being deemed by the existing laws to be appropriated to *superstitious purposes* and as such are liable to confiscation; and when alienated or seized upon by malevolent person cannot be recovered by law; Instances of such alienation and seizures might be adduced.

3. That of Catholics serving in His Majesty's Army and Navy being withheld from attending Divine Service according to the rite of their own religion on Sundays and festivals, and of their being compelled to go to Protestant Churches on those days against their will, an evil which leads brave and loyal subjects to complain and be discontented at a time when every heart and hand should be united to oppose the enemy; and the United Kingdom should be as one man.

4. By the 13th Charles II, commonly called the Corporation Act, their whole body is excluded from offices in cities and corporations.

5. By the 25th Charles II, commonly called the Test Act, their whole body is excluded from civil and military offices.

6. By the 7th and 8th William III, c. 27 Roman Catholics are liable to be prevented from voting at elections.

7. By the 30th Charles II, s. 2. c. 1, Roman Catholic peers are prevented from filling their hereditary seats in Parliament.

8. By the same statute Roman Catholics are prevented from sitting in the House of Commons.

9. By several statutes Roman Catholics are disabled from presenting to advowsons, a legal incident of property which the law allows even to the Jew.

10. Though a considerable proportion of His Majesty's fleets and armies was Catholic, not only is no provision made for their religious comforts etc., but by the articles of war they are liable to the very heaviest pains and penalties for refusing to join in those acts of conformity to the religious rites of the Established Church. By the articles of war, section I, a soldier absenting himself from Divine service and sermon is liable, for the first offence, to forfeit one Shilling, and for the second and every other offence, to forfeit one Shilling and to be put in irons. By the same articles section 2, article 5, ' if he shall disobey any lawful command of his superior (and of course if he shall disobey any lawful command of his superior to attend Divine Service and Sermon) he shall suffer death or such punishment as by general court martial shall be awarded.

11. In common with the rest of his Majesty's subjects the Roman Catholics contribute to the support of the Established Religion; they have also to support their own religious functionaries; and thus have a double religious establishment to defray. Of course, however, they do not complain; but they think it a serious grievance that their own religious endowments are not legalised like those of the Protestant Dissenters.

12. In hospitals, workhouses, and other public institutions the attendance of the ministers of their own communion is sometime denied to the poor of the Roman Catholic religion, and the children of the Roman Catholic poor are sometimes forced into Protestant schools under the eyes of their parents."

Like Catholics, the Untouchables also suffer from certain disabilities.

II

[The following essay has been received from Shri S. S. Rege. As it deals with 'Negroes & Slavery' (One of the subjects of the scheme of this Chapter) which has not been dealt with in the above discussion, it has been included here—Ed.]

Providence it seems has inexorably doomed the continent of Africa to be only a nursery of slaves for the free and civilised peoples of Asia and Europe. The Negro was imported as a slave by the Arabs into Asia long before he was introduced as a slave by the Europeans into America. Although this is so, Negro slavery in America and in the English Colonies has had a sorrowful history which has made people forget the importation of the Negro as a slave in Asia and quite naturally because Negro slavery in America as carried on by the Europeans was a most revolting thing. It began in the first decade of the 16th Century and lasted till the middle of the 19th Century.

In the half century after Columbus first landed in the Bahama Island in 1492, the Spaniards conquered and partly occupied a huge area stretching from Mexico through Peru to Uruguay and including all the larger west Indian Islands,

while in 1531 the Portuguese began the colonisation of Brazil. At once the new comers, the Portuguese and the Spaniards, set themselves to exploit the great natural wealth of their acquisitions, to work the gold and silver mines on the main land and to lay out plantations of tobacco indigo and sugar in the rich soil of the island. But they were soon confronted by the difficulty of procuring the requisite supply of labour. A great deal of it was needed, and the cost of white men's wages and the heat of the tropical sun made it virtually impossible for the Europeans to provide it for themselves. The only labour supply of a non-European character available on the spot consisted of the native Indians. The Portuguese and the Spaniards had massacred many Indians during the conquest. Many had fled to the mountains and forest from the scourge of the invaders. Those that were available were made slaves and made to work in the mines. Under the lash of the Portuguese and the Spaniards and the relentless labour that was exacted from them in the mines and in the fields the Indians sickened and died.

The conquistadors—as the Spanish pioneers in South America were called—under the leadership of Nicholas de Ovando who followed promptly the trail of Columbus, brought with them a young priest Batrolome' de Las Casas who was well known for his piety. Las Casas was charged by the Court of Spain to deal lovingly with the Indians in the hope of bringing them to a knowledge of the sacred Christian faith. Las Casas was the first Bishop of Mexico. In performing the duty with which he was charged Las Casas while in Haiti witnessed the cruelties that were practised by the conquistadors upon the Indians and engaged himself passionately to the end of his life in preserving the pitiable remnants of the Caribbeans as the Indians of Haiti were called, from the inevitable destruction at the hands of their masters. The Caribbeans were a gentle, un-offending and hospitable race. They numbered no less than 1,000,000 persons when Columbus found them, formed into kingdoms and ruled peacefully by their caciques. Under the systematic cruelty of these Spanish adventurers who came after Columbus their numbers were reduced to a bare 60,000. It is recorded that entire villages committed suicide inviting others to join them as the only way of escaping this scourge and this tyranny. Las Casas was a spectator to many of these scenes of self immolations. He protested in righteous anger. But his protests went in vain and were bound to go in vain. The clearing of the forest, the tilling of the soil and the working of the mines had to go on. Without this the kingdom given by God could not become the Paradise of man. Las Casas realised this. But he was also overwhelmed with grief at the thought of what the Indians would have to go through if this plan was to be realised. His benevolent instincts led him to petition the King of Spain to allow the free importation of Negroes. The Spanish Government in 1511 decreed that a large number of

Negroes should be transported to the New World. In pursuance of this there came ships laden with African Negroes as cargo to make the New World a Paradise for man. For a few years both worked under the Conquistadors, Indians as well as Negroes. The sturdiness of the Negroes as compared with the Indians was soon proved. One of the Conquistadors has testified that when he prepared his timbers for the four brigantines that pass through the Isthmus from the Atlantic to the waters which flowed into the Pacific, he had used several hundred Indians and thirty Negroes, and, in the execution of this task, he found that 500 Indians perished and the thirty Negroes survived. The Negroes not only survived but prospered so much that it came to be a common opinion "that unless a Negro should happen to be hanged he would never die; for as yet, none had been known to perish from infirmity ". The Negro by his own conduct and character gave evidence that he was a more efficient tool than the Indian. The result was that the Indian was let go and the Negro was preferred for the labour, the former because God made him less sturdy and the latter because God made him more sturdy. The result was that the Indian escaped slavery and the Negro took over the destiny which was intended by the Conquistadors to apply to him a destiny to which he was invited by the pious and benevolent priest Las Casas and for which the Negro showed his own credentials of fitness.

Having found that " one Negro does more work than four Indians" there was opened at once a regular market for trading in Negroes. The market which was opened by the Portuguese on the West Coast of Africa began immediately to show its profits and quite naturally because the exploitation of the untold wealth of the New World was impossible without Negro labour. People became so engrossed in this new business in human beings that the search for a new route to the East, which began it all, was abandoned.

There was a keen competition between the various nations of Europe for a share in this new line in commerce. A papal Bull of demarcation had created for Spain and Portugal a monopoly on the wealth flowing in from the New World. The English and the Dutch feared there was danger to all Europe in this monopoly of American resources and were determined not to allow it.

The English took a good hand in securing this trade for the benefit of their nation. The first deal took place in 1553 when 24 Negroes were brought from the Coast of Africa and quietly sold in the English market. The most intrepid, and who later became the most heartless of man stealers known to history was John Hawkins. Under Elizabeth he sailed forth in the good ship *Jesus* to get Negroes from Africa whom he sold into the Spanish Colonies. Bent on breaking the monopoly of Spain Sir Francis Drake followed Hawkins. International disputes over the pirating of these adventures arose which culminated in the clash and destruction of the Spanish Armada. It is interesting to bear in mind that in these

disputes each nation shamelessly asserted that these acts of piracy committed by their subjects in stealing Negro slaves were " no private but public actions " supported by the respective states.

As though the irony involved in using the Ship *Jesus* for carrying the Negroes for enslavement was not enough there occurred another event which also was full of irony. It was the simultaneous landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on Plymouth Rock in the *Mayflower*, and the landing of twenty Negroes at Jamestown in Virginia from a barnacled and sea worn brig which sailed up the James river and brought them for the use of the gentlemen adventurers of the first successful English Colony of Virginia in America.

Thus were introduced into America the Negroes and the Pilgrim Fathers who stepped into it almost at the same time, the Pilgrim Fathers for preserving their liberty and the Negro for losing his freedom. For a long time the Negro formed a dominant element in the population of the American Colonies so far as numbers were considered. In a real sense America including its islands was settled chiefly from Africa and by Negroes. Before 1800 the number of Negroes brought in America was more than twenty times that of all Europeans combined. This was inevitable. The population of Europe was small, reduced further by its long wars and just emerging itself from a backward culture. For a long time the status of the imported Negro was undefined. The twenty Negroes brought by the Dutch and who landed in Jamestown were not immediately stamped in the Colony as slaves. They were accepted on much the same basis as the indentured servants. It has been found that in the muster rolls of the Colony of Virginia in 1624 and 1625 there were recorded 23 Negroes all of whom were listed as ' servants ' as were the whites of the same class. It is also recorded that thirty-four years after the arrival of the twenty Negroes one of them Anthony Johnson got a judgment from the Court sustaining his claim to perpetual service of John Caster, another Negro. The status of slavery was not crystallised for fifty years and steps by which it became crystallised were very gradual.

To begin with there was the law of servitude which applied to all servants whether they were Negroes or whites. In course of time a distinction came to be made in the treatment of the Negroes and white servants due to the fear of an alien and pagan people which as they became traditional and gained the sanction of custom, gradually modified the status of the African and transformed Negro servitude into Negro slavery. The slavery of the Negro in the American Colonies grew by the gradual addition of incidents modifying the law and custom of servitude. In this transition from servitude to slavery there are two principal steps. The first step in the transition was taken when the custom of holding Negroes "servants for life" was recognised. As has been observed, the distinguishing mark of the state of slavery is not the loss of liberty, political and

civil but the perpetuity and absolute character of that loss, whether voluntary or involuntary in origin. It differs then from other forms of servitude limited in place or time, such as medieval vassalage, villeinage, modern serfdom, and technical servitude, in degree rather than in kind. The efforts of the planters to lengthen the terms of the service of their servants which failed with the white servants succeeded with the black. Public opinion supported the change because the blacks were regarded as dangerous if left uncontrolled. The second step by which Negro servitude was converted into Negro slavery was taken when the condition and status of the mother was extended to and continued in her offspring. The transmission from mother to child of the conditions of slavery for life grew naturally out of the fact that the master necessarily controlled the child, controlling the mother. It was evident that parents, under an obligation of life service, could make no valid provision for the support of their offspring and that a just title to the service of the child might rest on the master's maintenance. This change which had undoubtedly been effected in custom long before it was formally sanctioned by law was recognised by statute in the different states of America between 1662 and 1741.

This is how the Negro who was originally only a servant became a slave. It is to be noted that slavery in Africa the home of the Negro is a native institution and is very ancient. The most common ways of becoming a slave were: (1) By being born a slave, (2) by being sold into slavery for debt, (3) by becoming a slave through capture in war and (4) by kidnapping individuals and selling them into slavery due to revenge or greed and gain. The Negro was really familiar with the slave system and tasted the pleasures of a slave owner. One therefore may not feel the same sympathy with the Negro when he was made to give up the status of a master and made to occupy the position of a slave. But looked at even as a case of retribution well deserved, his condition as a slave in the New World to which he was transplanted, cannot fail to excite a righteous indignation for the miseries to which he was subjected by his new and alien masters.

How great were the miseries of the Negro in the New World when he became subject to the system of slavery, it is not possible for the inhabitants of Europe or Asia to imagine. They may be described under three heads. The miseries of his capture, the miseries of travel and the miseries of his toil. First as to the ways of capturing Negroes for enslavement. In the early days Negroes could be rounded up by sudden landings on the coast: but in time the Negroes learned to watch for the coming of the ships and take refuge in the bush; and, though adventurous traders sometimes penetrated inland themselves, their usual custom was to do business with professional native or half caste dealers who took the cheap goods they had bought from Europe cloth, beads, hardware, muskets and powder, spirit—and bartered them for slaves with chiefs up-country. There is nothing to

show that the chiefs, of the stronger tribes at any rate, resisted or wanted to resist the fascination of these wares, especially the guns and drink. Enslavement within a tribe, it was observed, became the penalty for less and less serious offences; and inter-tribal warfare with slaves for its motive as well as the kidnapping of women and children in peacetime became a more or less constant feature of African life, spreading steadily into the interior of the continent with the steady infiltration of the trade.

Secondly as to the mode of transporting the Negro to America. Having bought his slaves, the dealer marshalled them, men, women and children, in a caravan for the march, sometimes a very long march to the coast. Usually fetters were put on them to prevent escape and often they were locked in the "slave stick"—a long pole with a crutch at the end for fastening round the neck. They carried on their heads the loads of foodstuffs and other baggage required for the journey or the ivory or other native produce which the dealer might have bought. The rigours of the march were often too much for the weaker members of the party. Slaves who fell sick were killed or left to die. The more frequented slavetracks were strewn with human bones. Arrived at the coast, they were stowed on board the slave ships, which were specially fitted for their transport. The hold was divided horizontally by decks about three feet apart with a gangway down the middle. On these shelves the slaves were laid, handcuffed in pairs, men and women in separate holds. Since the bigger the cargo, the bigger the profit, they were some times packed so tightly that they could scarcely turn round. In a ship of 150 tons as many as 600 slaves were carried. The direct voyage to Brazil was fairly short, but the so-called "Middle Passage" to the West Indies—the main centre of distribution—might be protracted for several weeks by adverse or dropping winds. If it was calm enough, the slaves were brought up on deck and urged or forced to dance for exercise. In rough weather conditions of the slaves in the hold may be imagined. Disease of course, was rife on board. Though instruments were provided for forcibly feeding those who refused to eat, it was reckoned in the latter eighteenth century that on the average at least one-sixth of a cargo died on the voyage. As the end of the voyage approached, the slaves were examined and prepared for sale. Wounds, caused by storm or ill usage, were doctored up and as far as possible concealed. But the agents at the ports often complained that the "parcels of Negroes" landed were "bad" or "mean" or "much abused ". Finally, on shipboard or in the public slave market, the slaves were put up for sale by "scramble" or auction. The price of a healthy man rose as high as £ 60 during the eighteenth century. The sick and injured were lumped with feeble women and children and sold off cheap as " refuse ". Even when at last they reached the plantations, the slaves had to face one more ideal before they settled down to endure what was left to them of life. The first months of

employment were known as the period of "seasoning" and during it no less on an average of one third of the novices failed to adjust themselves in body or spirit to the new conditions of climate or food or labour and died. Taking all the deaths together in the slave-catching wars or raids, on the march to the sea, during the "Middle Passage" and in "seasoning"—it has been moderately reckoned that for every African Negro who became "seasoned" at least one other Negro was killed.

Thirdly as to the actual conditions of life which a "seasoned" Negro slave had to undergo. The Negro slavery gave the Master two rights, which were indisputably established, the right to own and the right to punish. The right to own was given a wide meaning. By virtue of it the Master had not merely a right to the services of the Negro as a servant, but he had also the right to sell those services, to transmit by inheritance and to alienate them in any way he liked. The effect of this conception of the right was "to completely confound and identify the person of the slave with the thing owned." The conception of the slave as property made the Negro liable to be seized in payment of his master's debts. Even after such slaves had been emancipated they were still liable to seizure for the payment of debts contracted prior to their emancipation. The conception of a slave as property rather than as person added further disability to the legal or civil status. He could neither own nor enjoy property in his own right. This was unlike the Roman Law, which did allow the slaves to own property, which was called peculiar. It was a limited right but it was still an important right because it shows that the Roman Law did recognise that a slave / though property was also a person. Not being a person a Negro as a slave could neither engage in trade nor marry. The right of the Master to punish a slave was also given a very cruel interpretation in its application to the Negro. In a case which arose in the state of North Carolina Court in 1829 the Chief Justice in acquitting the Master who was indicted for beating his slave observed:

" It was a mistake to say that the relations of Master and slave were like those of parent and child. The object of the parent in training his son was to render him fit to live the life of a free man, and, as a means to that end, he gave him moral and intellectual instruction. With the case of the slave it was very different. There could be no sense in addressing moral considerations to a slave. The end of slavery is the profit of the Master, his security and public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person and his posterity to live without knowledge and without capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that neither may reap the fruits. What moral consideration shall be addressed to such a being to convince him, that it is impossible, but that the most stupid must feel and know can never be true—that he is thus to labour on a principle of natural duty, or for the sake of his own personal happiness? Such services can only be expected from one who

has no will of his own, who surrenders his will in implicit obedience to that of another. Such obedience is the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body. There is nothing else, which can operate to produce the effect. The power of the Master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect."

The result of such an interpretation of the Master's right to punish was that for a long time in the U.S.A. if a Negro slave chanced to die as a consequence of " a lawful correction " it was regarded by law as a lamentable and accidental homicide. How mercilessly this right to punish was exercised by the masters will be realized by a perusal of the extracts from letters written by a resident in Antigua in 1787. Says the writer—

"The Negroes are turned out at sunrise, and employed in gangs from twenty to sixty or upwards, under the inspection of white overseers, generally poor scotch lads, who by their assiduity and industry frequently become masters of the plantations, to which they make out as indentured servants. Subordinate to these overseers are drivers, who are mostly black or mulatto fellows of the worst dispositions; these men are furnished with whips, while on duty, which they are obliged on pain of severe punishment to have with them, and are authorised to flog wherever they see the least relaxation from labour; nor is it a consideration with them, whether it proceeds from idleness, or inability, paying at the same time, little or no regard to age or sex. At twelve they are turned in (that is leave off work) to get what they can to refresh nature with; at half past one the bell rings, when they turn out and resume their labour until sunset.....

"The punishments inflicted on slaves in this island, are various and tormenting..... Among which is the thumbscrew, a barbarous invention to fasten the thumbs together, which appears to cause excruciating pain. The " iron necklace " is a ring, locked and riveted about the neck; to these, collars are frequently added. Which prevent the wearers from laying down their heads with any degree of comfort. The " boots " are strong iron rings, full four inches in circumference:. Closed just above the ankles; to these some owners prefix chain, which the miserable sufferers, if able to work, must manage as well as they can, and it is not un frequent to see in the streets of this town, at midday, Negroes chained together by these necklaces, as well as the boots.... The 'spurs' are rings of iron, similar to the boots, to which are added spikes from three to four inches long, placed horizontally. A chain fastened about the body with a padlock is another mode of tormenting this oppressed race of being."

It would be a great mistake of judging a whole class of slave owners by the vice of individuals. Often enough, the attitude of slaves to their Masters was quite friendly and equally often the attitude of the Masters to their slaves was kindly. None the less the system was a system founded on a purely economic basis

making it inevitable that human being be created as mere tools to be used without being influenced by any considerations of humanity.

It is unnecessary to adduce any more cases to illustrate the fact that the lowly, unfree and unprivileged classes have existed in the past in countries other than India. What is of importance is that these unfree, unprivileged classes have disappeared as a separate class and have become part and parcel of the great Society. The question is: Why has untouchability not disappeared?

There are various reasons. They are discussed in the following Chapters.

Chapter 9

HINDUS AND WANT OF PUBLIC CONSCIENCE

The cases in which the Hindus have indulged in violence against the Untouchables are cases of fight for equal freedom to all. If the Untouchables want to go in procession, they have no objection to the Hindus doing the same. If the Untouchables want to wear gold and silver ornaments, they do not object to the Hindus having the same right. If the Untouchables want to send their children to schools, they are not against the children of the Hindus having full freedom for education. If the Untouchables wish to draw water from the well, they have no objection to the Hindus exercising their right to take water. One can go on *ad infinitum*. But it is unnecessary. The point is easy and simple to grasp. It is that whatever freedom the Untouchables claim is not exclusive to them and is not inconsistent with the right of the Hindus to equal freedom. Why then does the Hindus use violence to put down such innocent and perfectly lawful acts? Why does he regard his lawlessness as lawful? Who cannot see that the acts and omissions of the Hindus in his dealings with the Untouchables cannot be called by any other name except that of social wrongs. The acts and omissions are not mere inequities; they are not mere indignities. They are gross instances of man's inhumanity to man. For a doctor not to treat a patient because the patient is an Untouchable, for a body of Hindu villages to burn the houses of the Untouchables, to throw human excreta in their well if these are not acts of inhumanity, I wonder what can be? The question is why has the Hindu no conscience?

There is only one answer to these questions. The class composition in other countries were based on economic and social considerations. Slavery and serfdom had no foundation in religion. Untouchability though it can give and does economic advantages to the Hindus, is primarily based on religion. There is nothing sacrosanct in economic and social interests. They yield to time and circumstances. This is the broad explanation why slavery and serfdom have vanished and why untouchability has not. The same is the answer to the two

other questions. If the Hindu observes untouchability it is because his religion enjoins him to do so. If he is ruthless and lawless in putting down the Untouchables rising against his Established Order, it is because his religion not only tells him that the Established Order is divine and therefore sacrosanct but also imposes upon him a duty to see that this Established Order is maintained by all means possible. If he does not listen to the call of humanity, it is because his religion does not enjoin him to regard the Untouchables as human beings. If he does not feel any qualms of conscience in assaulting, looting, burning and other acts of atrocities against the Untouchables, it is because his religion tells him that nothing is sin, which is done in defence of the social order.

Many Hindus would regard this as a travesty of their religion. The best way to meet the charge is to quote Chapter and verse from Manu who is the architect of Hindu Society. Let anyone, who denies what I have said, read the following Commands of Manu regarding untouchability. Untouchables and the duties of the Hindus in regard to them:

" 1. All those tribes in this world, which are excluded from (the community of) those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet (of Brahman), are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the Mlenchhas (barbarians) or that of the Aryans.

2. Near well known trees and burial ground, on mountains and in groves, let these (tribes) dwell, known (by certain marks), and subsisting by their peculiar occupations.

3. But the dwellings of the Chandalas and Shwapakas shall be outside the village, they must be made Apatras and their wealth (shall be) dogs and donkeys.

4. Their dress (shall be) the garments of the dead, (they shall eat) their food from broken dishes, black iron (shall be) their ornaments, they must always wander from place to place.

5. A man who fulfils a religious duty shall not seek intercourse with them; their transactions (shall be) among themselves, and their marriages with their equals.

6. Their food shall be given to them by others (than an Aryan giver) in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in villages and in towns.

7. By day they must go about for the purpose of their work, distinguished by marks at the king's command, and they shall carry out the corpses (of persons) who have no relatives, that is a settled rule.

8. By the king's order, they shall always execute the criminals in accordance with the law, and they shall take for themselves the clothes, the beds and the ornaments of (such) criminals.

9. He who has had connection with a woman of one of the lowest castes shall be put to death.

10. If one who (being a member of the Chandalas, or some other low caste) must not be touched, intentionally defiles by his touch one who (as a member of a twice born caste) may be touched (by the other twice born persons only) he shall be put to death." Can anybody, who reads these Commandments of Manu deny that it is Hindu religion, which is responsible for the perpetuation of untouchability and for the lawlessness and want of conscience on the part of the Hindus towards the Untouchables? Indeed, if the acts of omission and commission which have been detailed in the earlier Chapters of this book were correlated to these ten Commandments, it will be found that the Hindus in committing these acts are merely following the Commandments of Manu. If the Hindu will not touch an Untouchable and regards it as an offence if an Untouchable touches him, it is because of the Commandments Nos. 5 and 10. If the Hindus insist upon the segregation of the Untouchables, it is because of Commandment No. 3. If the Hindu will not allow the Untouchable to wear clean clothes, gold ornaments, he is only following Commandment No. 8. If the Hindu will not tolerate an Untouchable acquiring property and wealth, he is only following Commandment No. 3.

It is really unnecessary to labour the matter further. It is incontrovertible that the main cause which is responsible for the fate of the Untouchables is the Hindu religion and its teachings. A comparison between Paganism and Christianity in relation to slavery and Hinduism in relation to untouchability reveals how different has been the influence of the two religions on human institutions, how elevating has been the influence of the former and how degrading that of the latter. Those who are fond of comparing slavery with Untouchability do not realize that they are facing a paradox. Legally the slave was not a freeman. Yet, socially he had all the freedom necessary for the growth of his personality. Legally the Untouchable is a freeman. Yet, socially he has no freedom for the growth of his personality.

This is indeed a very glaring paradox. What is the explanation of this paradox? There is only one explanation of this paradox. It is that while religion was on the side of the slave, religion has been against the Untouchables. The Roman law declared that the slave was not a person. But the religion of Rome refused to accept that principle, at any rate, refused to extend that principle to social field. It treated him as a human being fit for comradeship. The Hindu Law declared that the Untouchable was not a person. Contrary to Paganism, the Hindu religion not only accepted the principle but also extended it to the social field. As the Hindu Law did not regard the Untouchable a person, Hinduism refused to regard him as a human being fit for comradeship.

That the Roman religion saved the slave from the social degradation consequent upon his legal degradation is beyond question. It saved him from

such degradation in three different ways. One way by which the Roman religion saved the slave was to keep the most sacred place open for the slave to occupy. As has been observed:

" Roman religion was never hostile to the slave. It did not close the temple doors against him; it did not banish him from its festivals. If slaves were excluded from certain ceremonies the same may be said of freemen and women—men being excluded from the rites of Bona Dea, Vesta and Ceres, women from those of Hercules at the Ara Maxima. In the days when the old Roman divinities counted for something, the slave came to be informally included in the family, and could consider himself under the protection of the Gods of the household. Augustus ordered that freed women should be eligible as priestesses of Vesta. The law insisted that a slave's grave should be regarded as sacred and* for his soul Roman Mythology provided no special heaven and no particular hell. Even Juvenal agrees that the slave's soul and body, is made of the same stuff as his master."

The second way in which the Roman religion helped the slave was equivalent to lodging a complaint before the City Prefect whose duty it became to hear cases of wrong done to slaves by their masters. This was a secular remedy. But the Roman religion had provided another and a better remedy. According to it, the slave was entitled to throw himself before the altar and demand that he should be sold to a kinder master.

The third way in which the Roman religion saved the slave by preventing the Roman Law from destroying the sanctity of his personality as a human being. It did not make him unfit for human association and comradeship. For the Roman slave this was the greatest saving grace. Suppose Roman society had an objection to buy vegetables, milk, butter or take water or wine from the hands of the slave; suppose Roman society had an objection to allow slaves to touch them, to enter their houses, travel with them in cars, etc., would it have been possible for the master to train his slave to raise him from semi-barbarism to a cultured state? Obviously not; it is because the slave was not held to be an Untouchable that the master could train him and raise him. We again come back therefore to the same conclusion, namely, that What has saved the slave is that his personality was recognised by society and what has ruined the Untouchable is that Hindu society did not recognise his personality, treated him as one whose personality was unclean which rendered him as unfit for human association and common dealing.

There was no gulf, social or religious, which separated the slave from the rest of the society. In outward appearance he did not differ from the freeman; neither colour nor clothing revealed his condition; he witnessed the same games as the freeman; he shared in the life of the Municipal towns and got employed in the

State service, engaged himself in trade and commerce as all freemen did. Often apparent equality in outward things counts far more to the individual than actual identity of rights before the law. Between the slave and the freed there seems often to have been little social barrier, Marriage between the slave and freed and even freed and slave was very common. The slave status carried no stigma on the man in the slave. He was Touchable and even respectable. All this was due to the attitude of the Roman religion towards the slave.

There is no space to describe at length the attitude of Christianity to slavery. But it was different from Paganism. It is not known to many that during the period of slavery in America, Christian priests were not prepared to convert Negro slaves to Christianity because of their view that it would degrade Christianity if the convert remained a slave. In their opinion, one Christian could not hold another Christian as a slave. He was bound to offer him fellowship.

To sum up. Law and Religion are two forces which govern the i conduct of men. At times, they act as handmaids to each other. At other times, they act as check and counter-check. Of the two forces, Law is personal while religion is impersonal. Law being personal it is Capable of being unjust and iniquitous. But religion being impersonal, it can be impartial. If religion remains impartial, it is capable of defeating the inequity committed by law. This is exactly what happened in Rome in regard to the slave. That is why religion is believed to ennoble man and not to degrade him. Hinduism is an exception. It has made the Untouchable sub-human. It has made the Hindu inhuman. There is no escape to either from the established order of the sub-human and the inhuman.

CHAPTER 10

HINDUS AND THEIR WANT OF SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

Everyone who feels moved by the deplorable condition of the Untouchables begins by saying: "We must do something for the Untouchables ". One seldom hears any of the persons interested in the problem saying: "Let us do something to change the Hindu." It is invariably assumed that the object to the reclaimed is the Untouchables as though untouchability was due to his depravity and that he alone is responsible for his condition. If there is to be a Mission, it must be to the Untouchables. Nothing requires to be done to the Hindu. He is sound in mind, manners and morals. He is whole, there is nothing wrong with him. He is not the Sinner.

What is the real state of affairs? This argument that there is nothing wrong with the Hindus and that the Untouchable is responsible for whatever wrong he suffers is very much the argument that is used by the Christians for defending themselves against the inhuman treatment accorded by them to the Jews. A very

crushing reply has been given by Mr. Louis Goulding to the Christians on behalf of the suffering Jews. In discussing the source of the Jewish Problem Mr. Louis Goulding says:

" I beg leave to give a very homely instance of the sense in which I consider the Jewish Problem in essence a Gentile Problem. A close acquaintance of mine is a certain Irish Terrier of mixed pedigree, the dog Paddy, who is to my friend John Smith as the apple of both his eyes. Paddy dislikes Scotch terriers; it is enough for one to pass within twenty yards of Paddy to deafen the neighbourhood with challenges and insults. It is a practice which John Smith deplures, which, therefore, he does his best to check—all the more as the object of Paddy's detestation are often inoffensive creatures, who seldom speak first. Despite all his affection for Paddy, he considers, as I do, that Paddy's unmannerly behaviour is due to some measure of original sin in Paddy. It has not yet been suggested to us that what is here involved is a Scotch Terrier Problem and that when Paddy attacks a neighbour who is peacefully engaged in inspecting the evening smells it is the neighbour who should be arraigned for inciting to attack by the fact of his existence."

If we equate Paddy to the Hindu and Scotch Terrier to the Untouchable the argument of Goulding will apply to the Hindus no less than it does to the Christians. If for the reasons given by Mr. Goulding the Jewish Problem is in reality a Christian Problem then the Problem of the Untouchables is primarily a Hindu Problem.

Are the Hindus conscious, do they recognise that the Untouchables are a problem to them? Are they worried about it? Is it weighing on their minds? Certain obvious tests may be applied in order to ascertain the truth. One test is the volume of literature on the subject. One can take the volume of literature issued on the Negroes of America as a standard measure. One is amazed at the huge amount of printed material that exists in the United States on the subject of the Negroes. It is said that a really complete bibliography on the Negro Problem would run up to several hundred thousand titles. The literature is really immeasurable. This proves as nothing else can, how much it is a problem to the Whites. It has disturbed through several generations all classes of people in America, the religious moralists, the political philosophers, the Statesmen, the philanthropists, the social scientists, the politicians, the businessmen and the plain ordinary citizen as well.

What is the amount of literature on the Untouchables that exists in India? Not more than half a dozen pamphlets!

Another test would be the test of social behaviour. I give below two cases reported in the papers. One is from the '*Pratap*' of 5th March 1926. It gives the following news:

" On the 23rd of February at about 11 o'clock in the day, a group of about 12 or 13 were digging earth in Begumganj, Lucknow when the quarry collapsed and they were all buried under heaps of earth. One boy and six women were rescued after the earth had been removed out of whom only one woman turned out to be alive, who belonged to Mirpur. She had received grievous injuries and her condition was very critical. The Hindu inhabitants of Begumganj however refused to give a bed to lay that woman on. At last a Muslim offered a bed; now there was no Hindu prepared to help to carry the poor woman as far as her house. At last, a sweeper was called and he undertook to carry the woman to her home as she lay on the bed."

The best illustration of the absence of conscience in the Hindu towards the Untouchables is to be found in the following incident which is reported by the Correspondent of the '*Sangram*' and published in its issue of 10th July 1946. The correspondent says:

"A woman died on the 8th of July 1946 in the Anath Ashram (Beggars Home) called Azil situated in a village called Mhapse (in Goa) and maintained by Christians. The woman was believed to be a Hindu. She was alone and had no relations. Seeing that there was no one to dispose of the dead body and to perform funeral rites, the Hindus of the village came together and raised a subscription for the purpose. They brought the dead body out of the Beggars' Home. Just about that time some Untouchables, who knew the woman came there and recognized the dead body. The moment the Hindus came to know that the woman belonged to the Untouchables the Hindus who had gathered there deserted the dead body and started walking away. The Untouchables who had come requested the Hindus to give them the amount they had collected for buying the coffin and the shroud. The Hindus refused to part with the money saying that the money was collected from the subscribers on the representation that the deceased woman was a Hindu woman. As she is not a Hindu but an Untouchable, they can't spend the money on her funeral. The Untouchables had to do their best to dispose of their dead body. The Untouchables had good evidence of the love and affection the Hindus bear towards them.

The following is from the '*Milap*' of 2nd October 1925. Its correspondent reports:

" News has been received from Ruddurprayag that one evening in the first week of September a Harijan came to the Dharmashala (or monastery) of Ruddurprayag. When he learnt that a tiger came there every night, he requested the pastor of the Dharmashala to let him lie hidden in some corner of the Dharmashala for the night, so that he may remain safe from the tiger. The callous pastor, however, paid no heed to the request and closed the gates of the Dharmashala. The ill-starred Harijan laid himself down outside in one

corner, full of apprehensions of the tiger. Towards the end of the night the tiger came and attacked the Harijan. As the man was quite strong and healthy and despair made him fearless, he caught hold of the tiger's neck and shouted ' I have grabbed the tiger. Come and kill him'. But the high caste pastor did not open the door, nor did he offer any sort of help, so that very soon the grip of the Harijan loosened and the tiger also ran away. At present the man is lying wounded in Shrinagar (Garhwal) where he is getting himself treated. His condition is said to be critical."

The heartlessness disclosed by these instances shows that the Hindu does not bother about what he does to the Untouchables or about what happens to the Untouchables.

A third test would be the test of service and sacrifice for the uplift of the Untouchables. Here again, one may adopt the service and sacrifice of the Americans for raising the Negroes as our standard measure. Here are some figures.

Consider the requests made by the Whites for the benefit of the Negro education.

Testator	Amount (in Dollars)	Testator	Amount (in Dollars)
Kane	50.000	Mason	1.00.000
Harton	5.000	Naunbert	40.000
Troughton	1.60.600	Harrison	2.30.000
Ottinger	500	Munger	75.000
Gambrille	35.000	Corliss	45.000
Jarepki	1.000	Rosenbanin	1.000
Strock	500	Burton	1.000
Kidder	5.000	Conroy	1.00.000
Clodin	10.000	Kent	10.000
Wood	500	Duke	1.40.000
Harkness	12.50.000	Marciliat	5.000
Beatie	2.90,000	Masey	25.000
Marquant	5.000	Nicholas	20.000
Newton	5.000	Garretson	15.00.000
Hummington	25,000	Hatcher	20.000
Phelps-Stokes	2.80.000	Wright	10.000
Butler	30.000		

These figures relate to the period before 1930. They do not take account of residuary bequests.

Compare the Educational funds that exist for the advancement of education among the Negroes. They are:

- (i) The Avery Fund.
- (ii) The Vilas Bequest.
- (iii) The African Fund.
- (iv) The Buckingham Fund.
- (v) The George Washington Educational Fund.
- (vi) The Miner Fund.
- (vii) The Steward Missionary Foundation.
- (viii) The Daniel Hand Fund.
- (ix) The John Slater Fund.
- (x) The Phelps-Stokes Fund.

In addition to this, there are general Funds such as the Carnegie Corporation Julius Rosenwald Fund and the Rockefeller Foundation which also help the Negroes. The amounts distributed by these funds is not known. But they must be amounting to millions.

Compare the amount spent by Religious organizations on the education of the Negroes. Here are some interesting figures.

	Annual Expenditure (In Dollars)	Permanent fund for Negro Education (In Dollars)	Value of school plants, etc. (In Dollars)
American Baptist Home Mission Board	116,247	1,597,700	3,594,251
American Church Institute for Negroes (Episcopal)	185,100	450,000	3,000,000
American Missionary Association	368,057	3,228,421	3,200,000
Church of Christ (Disciples) United	91,072		500,000
Christian Missionary Society			
Lutheran Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America Board Colored Mission	74,900		175,000
Methodist Episcopal Church Board of Education. Institutions for Negroes	259,264	1,962,729	5,000,000
Methodist Episcopal Church Woman's Home Missionary Society of	104,975		360,000
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Division	405,327	1,994,032	3,560,000

of Missions for Colored People			
United Presbyterian Church Board of Mission for Freemen	98,000	645,000	1.000.000

It is estimated that the total amount spent for the religious and philanthropic organizations between 1865 and 1930 comes to 135,000,000 dollars on the advancement of the Negroes. Of this amount, 85,000,000 dollars have been contributed by the Whites.

What is the measure of service and sacrifice of the Hindus for the elevation of the Untouchables. The only organization the Hindus can boast of is the Harijan Sevak Sangh . Its capital fund does not probably go beyond 10 lakhs. Its annual expenditure does not go beyond a few thousand rupees on petty and insignificant and insubstantial purposes. The Fund is not a welfare fund. It is essentially a Political Fund intended to make the Untouchables vote with the Hindus.

Why is this difference? Why do the Americans exert so much in service and sacrifice for the elevation of the Negroes and why have the Hindus cared to do nothing for the elevation of the Untouchables? The answer is that the Americans have a social conscience while the Hindus have none. It is not that the Hindus have no sense of right and wrong, good and bad, moral and immoral. What is wrong with the Hindu is that his sense of moral obligation towards others is restricted to a limited class of people, namely, the members of his caste. As Mr. H. J. Paton says :

" Clearly a man may be a good member of a limited society without being a morally good man. There seem indeed to be already shadows or anticipations of moral excellence even in the man who carries out coherently an individual policy of life; and we begin to find something which we may almost mistake for virtue itself, when we consider the man who is a loyal member of any society, even of a gang of thieves. Yet although there must be honour among thieves, a thief is not therefore an honourable man. The morally good man seems to be the man who is good as a member not of a limited society but of an unlimited society—of a society of societies whose purpose includes all purposes, and beyond which there is no other society to be a source of conflicting claims of duties." The Untouchable does not belong to the society of the Hindus and the Hindu does not feel that he and the Untouchables belong to one society. This is the reason why the conduct of the Hindu is marked by a moralistic unconcernedness.

Not having conscience, the Hindu has no such thing in him as righteous indignation against the inequities and injustices from which the Untouchable has been suffering. He sees no wrong in these inequities and injustices and refuses to budge. By his absence of conscience the Hindu is a great obstacle in the path of the removal of untouchability.

CHAPTER 11 THE HINDU AND HIS BELIEF IN CASTE

Among the Hindu social reformers there is a moderate section. This section holds that untouchability is separate from the caste system. Following this ideology they hold that it is possible to remove untouchability without attacking the caste system. The religious minded Hindu is as opposed to the removal of untouchability as he is to the removal of the caste system. He is as opposed to dealing with social reform in two stages as he is in dealing with it in one stage. But the politically minded Hindu is tremendously fond of the idea. That is obviously for two reasons. In the first place, it gives the Hindu the chance of showing himself in international world as a better specimen of democracy than he really is. Secondly, by leaving caste alone there is no risk of the caste Hindus forsaking the Congress.

Those who propose to deal with untouchability without damaging the caste system, rest their case on verse 4 of Chapter X of the Manu Smriti. In the verse, Manu says that there are only four varnas and that there is no fifth varna. This verse is interpreted to mean that the untouchables are included in the fourth varna, that they are part of the Shudras and as there is no objection to touching the Shudras there could be no objection to touching the Untouchables. However pleasing this construction may be to the politically minded Hindu, it does accord with the intention of what Manu wanted to convey. The verse is open to another construction. It may mean that Manu was not prepared to enlarge the Chaturvarnya and make it a Panchavarnya by recognising these communities which were outside the four varnas as constituting the fifth varna. In saying that there is no fifth varna what he means to suggest is that he did not want to incorporate those outside the four varnas into the Hindu society by making the Hindu society consist of five varnas instead of four. That he wanted to convey the latter intention is abundantly clear by speaking of a category of people as Bahyas* or Varna Bahyas which means those outside the varna system. If Manu wanted to include all persons within the four varnas there was no reason for speaking of some people as varna Bahyas. Indeed, he recognises two subdivisions within the class of Varna Bahyas. He calls them Hinas and Antayevashins. Given these facts, it is obvious that the construction sought to be placed in the verse in the Manu Smriti will not deceive the orthodox Hindu into accepting that the maintenance of untouchability is contrary to the Manu Smriti and that its abolition is not therefore contrary to the tenets of the Hindu religion.

The argument based on the interpretation of Manu's text is too intellectual for the ordinary uneducated Hindu. He knows only two things. One thing he knows is

that there are three barriers in the matter of social intercourse which he must observe. They are (1) prohibition against inter-dining, (2) prohibition against inter-marriage, while in untouchability there is third barrier added and (3) prohibition against physically touching certain class of people. The first two barriers make up the caste. The third forms untouchability. The caste Hindu does not bother about the number of barriers. He is particular about the observance of the barrier. When he is asked not to observe, he turns round and asks why not? His argument is that, if I am free to observe the first two barriers, what is wrong if I observe the third? Psychologically, caste and untouchability are one integral system based on one and the same principle. If the caste Hindus observe untouchability it is because they believe in caste.

Looked at from this point of view, the idea of hoping to remove untouchability without destroying the caste system is an utter futility. The underlying idea that caste and untouchability are two different things is founded on a fallacy. The two are one and are inseparable. Untouchability is only an extension of the caste system. There can be no severance between the two. The two stand together and will fall together.

There is another reason why untouchability cannot disappear by a stratagem, legal or rational. As has already been pointed out, the Hindu social order is based on the principle of graded inequality. It may not be an exaggeration to say that not many people understand the significance of this principle. The social system based on inequality stands on a different footing from a social system based on graded, inequality. The former is a weak system which is not capable of self-preservation. The latter on the other hand, is capable of self-preservation. In a social system based on inequality, the low orders can combine to overthrow the system. None of them have any interest to preserve it. In a social system based on graded inequality the possibility of a general common attack by the aggrieved parties is non-existent. In a system of graded inequality, the aggrieved parties are not on a common level. This can happen only when they are only high and low. In the system of graded inequality there are the highest (the Brahmins). Below the highest are the higher (the Kshatriyas). Below the higher are those who are high (Vaishya). Below the high are the low (Shudra) and below the low are those who are lower (the Untouchables). All have a grievance against the highest and would like to bring about their down fall. But they will not combine. The higher is anxious to get rid of the highest but does not wish to combine with the high, the low and the lower lest they should reach his level and be his equal. The high wants to overthrow the higher who is above him but does not want to join hands with the low and the lower, lest they should rise to his status and become equal to him in rank. The low is anxious to pull down the highest, the higher and the high but he would not make a common cause with

the lower for fear of the lower gaining a higher status and becoming his equal in the system of graded inequality there is no such class as completely unprivileged class except the one which is at the base of the social pyramid. The privileges of the rest are graded. Even the low is a privileged class as compared with the lower. Each class being privileged, every class is interested in maintaining the social system.

Untouchability may be a misfortune to the Untouchables. But there is no doubt that it is a good fortune to the Hindus. It gives them a class which they can look down upon. The Hindus do not want a system in which nobody will be anybody. They also do not want a system in which everybody may be somebody. They want a system in which they will be some bodies and others will be nobodies. The Untouchables are nobodies. This makes the Hindus some bodies. The system of untouchability sustains the natural pride of the Hindus and make them feel as well as look big. This is an additional reason why the Hindus are not likely to give up untouchability particularly those large majority who are small men.

Untouchability will vanish only when the whole of the Hindu Social Order, particularly the caste system will be dissolved. Is this possible? Every institution is sustained by some sort of a sanction. There are three kinds of sanction, which supply life force to an institution. They are legal, social and religious. The vitality of the institution depends upon the nature of the sanction. What is the nature of the sanction behind the caste system? Unfortunately, the sanction behind the caste system is the religious sanction, for, the caste as a new form of the Varna system derives its sanction from the Vedas which form the sacred book of the Hindu religion and which are infallible. I say unfortunately because anything which has a religious sanction becomes by virtue of it sacred and eternal. To the Hindu, caste is sacred and caste is eternal. If caste cannot vanish what hope is there for untouchability to disappear?

[Contents](#)

[PART IV](#)